28: Spiro--137 [3] (1947-48) 1949 Woleaians
116, 763, 755, 533 Ifalik

"If a person is seriously ill, his relatives, both matrilineal and patrilineal, assemble in his home--or in the home in which he happens to be (1), for public wailing. They sing many chapeng, which are the religious songs, directed to the alus. When he is close to death, they sing a bwaruch--a love song--and, interestingly enough, with the same bodily movements that are normally employed. It is also interesting that this is the only time in which a bwarux is sung in the presence of both sexes. When he is dead, they sing a Garuaru le'zari, a lament for the loss of a child."

"1. We have already seen that if a person has a prolonged illness, he is moved from his own home to the home of another person, it being believed that the changing of his domicile will aid in his recovery."

"This period of wailing continues [WPM: see p. 137, paragraph 4] every evening until the person either recovers or dies. The people go about their normal tasks during the day, showing no indication of sorrow, but return again at night, to participate in the rite. The wailing scene is perhaps the most impressive and weirdest experience I have ever witnessed. Throughout my stay on the island, I was impressed with the natives' lack of 'primitiveness'. These were people like any people I knew 'back home.' The only intimation I had of the stereotype of the 'savage', was this experience of wailing. From a distance, both physical and psychological, from which I now write these lines, it is [138] difficult to rescucitate the wailing scene in my imagination, so that I shall quote directly from my field notes, for August 25.

'We have just come from one of the most depressing sights I have ever seen. The " "sick man" has been mourned regularly, every night, for one week. During the day, however, there has been no indication of sorrow, the family going about its daily routine with no apparent concern. This evening Tom came to inform us that the man was very ill and the people would be wailing tonight, as he was not expected to live. In fact a new loin cloth had been prepared, in which he would be wrapped, should he die. After eating our dinner, we hastened to the scene of the wailing. As we approached the house, there was no one in the courtyard, except for Tom who had been waiting for us, but the sound

of wierd and mournful wailing met our ears. The melody seems to be in a minor key and is very monotonous in its pattern, the same them repeated over and over again. But what it lacks in complexity and variation, it makes up in total effect. It is tragedy itself, penetrating to the very soul. It is almost death personified in all its tragedy and sorrow.'

As we entered the courtyard we were met by Tom, who brought us to the doorway, from which we could view the scene. The house, illuminated by a single, flickering candle, was filled with wailers, who were seated about the sick man. He was lying in the center of the room, with a flower garland on his head. The song being sung was a bwaruch, and as they sang, their bodies and arms would weave with the rhythm of the song, as in the love scene for which the song was originally composed. Each phrase would end with a loud, mournful, sob. At regular intervals the women would beat their chests with great force. The mother was particularly violent, tearing at her face with her finger nails.

This behavior is, of course, patterned, and it is difficult to tell whether the grief is genuine psychological grief, or merely stylized wailing. (2)

"2. Babies and infants are brought to these wailing ceremonies. Whether they are stylized or not is immaterial as far as the effect on the children must be. The abrupt change from the ever friendly, smiling and laughing adults, to the wailing, sad, ones must leave a deep impression on the children."

When the people are sure that a sick person is about to die his female relatives assemble to make a pandanus mat, in which he is wrapped at death. In the meantime, a new lavalava is brought, and as soon as the death is announced, the male relatives bring huge quantities of rope, in which the body will be tied."

2: Damm et al. --80 [2] (1909) 1938 Woleaians
116, 576, 763 Ifaluk

The customary greeting (gawón) for the people who are leaving is osámil, and for the ones who are staying it is gosálok. These forms are always used, even if the absence will be for a considerable period of time. There is no particular expression, that is a farewell to the dying.